

Історико-політичні проблеми сучасного світу:  
Збірник наукових статей. – Чернівці:  
Чернівецький національний університет,  
2023. – Т. 48. – С. 16-28  
DOI: 10.31861/mhpi2023.48.16-28

Modern Historical and Political Issues:  
Journal in Historical & Political Sciences. – Chernivtsi:  
Chernivtsi National University,  
2023. – Volume. 48. – pp. 16-28  
DOI: 10.31861/mhpi2023.48.16-28

УДК 327.3+061.2

© Viktoriia Olishevskа<sup>1</sup>

## Sport as a Tool of Soft Power: the Case of the Russian War's Start Against Ukraine

The concept of soft power is described as a key factor in giving a sense to the sports diplomacy of modern countries particularly in course of Russia starting the war against Ukraine. The arguments are given for the biased character of sport which is always endowed with a marker of nationality, as well as political and social colors, thus bringing the athletes and teams as well as sports infrastructure into a set of diplomatic and political tools.

Examples of the use of international competitions, the success of sports teams, and other athletic activities in the preparation and conducting of the military aggression of the Russian Federation against Ukraine, as well as diplomatic blackmail of Russia towards Europe and the USA on the verge of the 2020s, are given. Based on the analysis of media and foreign scientific sources, a toolkit of sports diplomacy is proposed for further use by modern countries practicing public diplomacy.

**Keywords:** soft power; public diplomacy; sports diplomacy; sports-washing, sports-talk.

### Спорт як інструмент м'якої сили: приклад розв'язання російської війни проти України

Описано концепт м'якої сили як ключового фактору наповнення змістом спортивної дипломатії сучасних країн, зокрема в розрізі початку повномасштабної російської війни проти України (2022 рік). Через таку призму наведено аргументи переважної заангажованості спорту як одиниці, що завжди наділяється маркером національності, а також політичних і соціальних забарвлень, що вносить атлетів, атлеток і команди, а також спортивну інфраструктуру в набір дипломатичних і політичних інструментів. Підкреслено важливість спортивної дипломатії для України, значимість якої також ґрунтується й на офіційній стратегії публічної дипломатії від МЗС, яка закріплює атлетів у якості захисників і захисниць міжнародного іміджу України.

Метою статті є аналіз спортивної дипломатії та конкретних прикладів використання міжнародних змагань, успіхів спортивних команд, спонсорства спортивних організацій структурами, що близькі до державних, і інших атлетичних активностей у підготовці та веденні військової агресії РФ проти України (2020-і роки), а також дипломатичного шантажу Росії в сторону Європи та США на межі 2020-х років. На основі аналізу медіа та іноземних наукових джерел запропоновано інструментарій спортивної дипломатії до подальшого використання сучасними країнами, що практикують публічну дипломатію. Доведено той факт, що сучасні актори міжнародних відносин, кількість і діапазон функцій і впливу яких лише зростає, можуть вільно та ефективно використовувати різноформатні, різнобюджетні та різномасштабні інструменти спортивної дипломатії, які здатні призвести не лише до посилення цих акторів, але й до зміни балансу сил, підштовхнути до мирних переговорів або, навпаки, згуртувати союзників перед конфліктною ситуацією. Також попереджено про негативні сторони для самого сектору спорту й суспільства через надмірну експлуатацію спортивної екосистеми в політичних цілях.

**Ключові слова:** м'яка сила; публічна дипломатія; спортивна дипломатія; відмивання спортом; мовні конструкти.

**Scientific problem and its significance.** Numerous international instances serve as a solid foundation for a thoughtful discussion about professional sports' capacity to amplify its presence in the socio-political realm. These instances encompass a wide spectrum, ranging from the escalation of Ukrainian-

<sup>1</sup> Ph.D. student, Department of International Relations and Diplomatic Service, Ivan Franko National University of Lviv, Ukraine. E-mail: volishevskа@gmail.com; <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-2674-779X>.

Russian tensions sparked by the depiction of Ukraine's map on the national football team's yellow and blue jersey to corruption scandals surrounding the organization of major events by international sports associations, like the 2022 FIFA World Cup. These precedents give even more significance to the fact that the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Ukraine included sports diplomacy into one of the spheres of the official diplomatic policy of our country<sup>2</sup>. That is why scholars need to continue examining cases where athletes have assumed roles as both spokespersons and instruments of influence on both domestic and international socio-political agendas. Furthermore, there is a need to establish the theoretical underpinnings for such a framework. Secondly, it is crucial to acknowledge the multifaceted nature of the realm of sports, which integrates it into the domain of international relations and imparts functions related to socialization and politicization.

**Analysis of previous research.** This article draws on the works of foreign authors such as John Bale, Stefan Borge, Alan Gutmann, and Simon Kuper, as well as the ideas of Joseph Nye, Zygmunt Bauman, and Nicholas Cull. It also incorporates official statements from FIFA, UEFA, and key figures in Ukrainian sports. While most scholars focus on nationalism, propaganda, and power dynamics in sports and politics, this article uniquely emphasizes sports as a communication tool and a means to strengthen local identity. Notably, there is a dearth of scientific research on these issues in Ukraine, prompting the author to analyze various media sources, including social media, speeches, visual elements, news, and reports.

**The aim of the research.** The primary objective of this article is to present arguments in favor of expanding the scope of participants in international relations – thus including athletes, sports teams, and sports-related processes and tools into the political and social agenda. Therefore, the author endeavors to underscore that sports should be regarded not solely as a tool of soft power but also as a significant factor that can either develop or worsen social and political matters. At the same time, it is highly important to explore the nature and wide fields of Russia's war against Ukraine to tackle the mentioned issues from various perspectives. The tasks of the research are: to prove that sports sphere easily impacts the political and social sectors; to strengthen the concept of sports diplomacy; to single out the actors and tools of sports diplomacy; to prove that sport can play the role in modern wars and peace-making processes.

**The main research.** One of the most striking examples of sport going beyond its scope and gaining wide significance is the situation when an essence of conflict or agon goes out through the means of sport. In ancient Greece, agon was defined as the search for superiority and the struggle for glory that can be gained through achievements in competitive situations, when a person shows a sense of self-worth, and morality and sometimes even risks one's life<sup>3</sup>. It is also characterized by a strong spirit of contest and competition, individualism, and pursuit of glory/victory, examples of which are sports tournaments, hunting, duels, and war<sup>4</sup>. In the early stages of civilization, the agon motive was successfully regulated by constant wars or other physically fatal confrontations, however, the sport still served as a physical preparation for the same military service back then. This role of sport was especially entrenched in ancient Rome and similar militant societies where only those exercises and sports competitions were taken seriously, which brought meanings and benefits to further use by the army<sup>5</sup>.

Moreover, the lack of regulatory mechanisms and relatively universal rules in such sports and military competitions of the time led to the fact that sporting events did not stray far from real battles. The American researcher Alan Guttmann notes: "The difference between a medieval knights tournament and a real battle was insignificant – in the battle over Bremul (1119) three people died when in the tournament in Nais 60 people lost their lives (1240)"<sup>6</sup>. In fact, Renaissance sports were also drowned in violence and aggression<sup>7</sup>. As culture evolved, agon's forms became "calmer". During the Industrial Revolution, centralized organization minimized violence, replacing it with sports and related activities. However, the innate human desire for competition and victory persists. Internal factors driving this

---

<sup>2</sup> Стратегія публічної дипломатії Міністерства закордонних справ України (2021), с. 9.

<sup>3</sup> Loy, J. and Hesketh, G. (1984) *The Agon Motif: A Prolegomenon for the Study of Agonetic Behavior*, *Contribution of Sociology to the Study of Sport*, p. 30.

<sup>4</sup> Стратегія публічної дипломатії Міністерства закордонних справ України (2021), с. 9.

<sup>5</sup> Baker, W. (1988) *Sports in the Western world*. University of Illinois Press, p. 30.

<sup>6</sup> Guttmann, A. (2004) *From ritual to record. The Nature of Modern Sports*. NY: Columbia University Press, p. 102.

<sup>7</sup> Leibs, A. (2004) *Sports and games of the Renaissance*. Westport: Greenwood, p. 56.

need include the desire to hate and bypass the opponent as one is an obstacle to victory; the desire to “survive” at any cost even at the expense of an opponent or damage to one's own body and spirit; willingness to break or bend the rules and take advantage of corruption<sup>8</sup>. All this rhetoric is very similar to the military one because it brings the sports opponent to the status of the enemy and involves very similar emotions and feelings. Here are some of the basic characteristics of such a sports-military discourse that were singled out in the course of this research:

- abstracting the enemy in war rhetoric depersonalizes through substituting personal pronouns with impersonal derogatory terms. Military competition benefits from distancing the unknown. Public war discourse often replaces “kill people” with phrases like “eliminate the enemy” or swaps “enemy” with “evil” justifying combat methods. In professional sports, these tendencies take on metaphorical meanings, seen in football cheers, songs, and fan expressions;

- giving the enemy additional qualities that are rooted in historical and spatial-stereotypical context. It is about the fact that athletes and teams, and especially fans of both, often perceive themselves and the opponent in a broader historical way – when two teams play against each other, their histories also play with each other<sup>9</sup>. We can see this especially vividly in principled confrontations, where historically determined archetypes, the results of former wars and battles as well as hyperbolic national characters emerge – even in everyday life such things are shed to the light, e.g. confrontation of France and England, Arab and Jewish battles as well as Polish and Ukrainian ones. Such fierce confrontations are accompanied not only by the rhetoric of war but also by other attributes of combat operations – a sports confrontation between rival cities, regions, and countries takes the form of a ritualized war, filled with anthems, military slogans, and banners, and also involves fanatical formations such as i.e. “brigades”, “legions” and “troops”<sup>10</sup>;

- a black-and-white vision of the sides in sports confrontations – this phenomenon is usually observed in local closed communities, interactions within which are characterized by the “Bedouin syndrome” or the principle of tribal wars among Bedouins. It is about a clear distinction and understanding of who is “us”, “friend” and who is “stranger”, or “enemy” that takes place according to the following principle: a friend of a friend is my friend, an enemy of a friend is my enemy, an enemy of an enemy is my friend, and the enemy's friend is my enemy<sup>11</sup>.

Thus, not only participation itself but just watching the game of your favorite team activates the mentioned discourse and a certain state of mind, which forces our body to prepare for a seemingly real fight or fly situation of conflict<sup>12</sup> – something we no longer dare to show in other places and conditions and what we would avoid in every day [civilized] life<sup>13</sup>.

#### ***How to sports-wash a war***

Back in the 1960s, the foreign minister of Franco's Spain, Fernando Maria Castiella and Maiz said: “The titles won by Real Madrid support the current state's regime. This football club is the best embassy we have ever had”<sup>14</sup>. Sports achievements have long been utilized to enhance a country's image, both domestically and internationally. Regardless of the state's nature, maintaining positive ratings is crucial. Sports align with a country's leadership policy, emphasizing its “correctness” through records and medals. Sports diplomacy, a subset of public diplomacy, integrates into a state's soft power toolkit, aiming to create a positive image and encourage alignment without coercion. It operates within the sports ecosystem, leveraging athletes, events, and decision-makers for political and social benefits. The theoretical foundation rests on the role of professional sports in the socio-political agenda, emphasizing soft power's historical use to influence others subtly. Academic recognition of soft power emerged in the 1980s, notably through Joseph Nye Jr., highlighting its ability to achieve objectives

<sup>8</sup> Parry, J. (2007) *Sport and spirituality*. Oxon: Routledge, p. 99.

<sup>9</sup> Kuper, S. (1996) *Football against the enemy*. London: Orion, p. 106.

<sup>10</sup> Bromberger, C. (1995) Football as a worldview and as a ritual. *French Cultural Studies*, p. 294.

<sup>11</sup> Dunning, E. (1999) *Sport matters*. London: Routledge, p. 78.

<sup>12</sup> Borge, S. (2019) *The philosophy of football*. London: Routledge, p. 203.

<sup>13</sup> Armstrong, G. (2003) *Football hooligans: knowing the score*. Oxford: Berg Publishers, p. 55.

<sup>14</sup> Zidan, K. (2022) How boxer-turned-politician Vitali Klitschko began preparing for war with Russia. Available from: <https://www.bloodyelbow.com/2022/1/13/22880241/vitali-klitschko-champion-boxing-politican-mayor-kyiv-putin-war-russia-ukraine> [28 August, 2023].

through attraction rather than coercion<sup>15</sup>. One of the embodiments of such a concept in practice, which is formed into a whole strategic direction of state policy and non-governmental actors, is public diplomacy, which only in the 90s of the 20th century came into widespread use in all circles<sup>16</sup>. From this perspective, public diplomacy is a useful and effective tool in the process of acquiring the soft power of an entity (from the governmental to the group or individual level of actors), which fits into a separate direction of activity of such an entity. To make these things clear the definitions of them should be given once again. Soft power is just a tool of public diplomacy as it can be a tool of other kind of approaches as well. While public diplomacy is linked more with democratic and liberal states, tools of soft power can be used by the totalitarians as well (in this case, it goes along with propaganda). Public diplomacy involves campaigns, exchanges, and interactions in various forms. Recognizing sports as integral to public diplomacy and broader socio-political interactions is crucial. Effective association with a country relies on understanding and frequent use of sports components, such as competitions, sponsors, and infrastructure. Totalitarian regimes may distort soft power, leading to sports-washing – a hybrid of attractiveness and coercion. For instance, Russia's sports activities illustrate this phenomenon, employing sports to improve international standing or divert attention from issues. In football, a specific Russian model emerges, involving reputation laundering and distraction from unpopular actions through sports-washing, implemented uniquely due to its pro-governmental nature. Examples demonstrate sports' role in preparing or conducting wars by Russians:

1) pro-government actors – in Russia, a totalitarian state reliant on hard power, pro-government actors extend influence, including in sports. Unlike democracies promoting mass products, Russia, controlled vertically by the state, uses entities like Gazprom as tools for foreign policy ambitions. Gazprom's state control transforms it into an instrument to increase EU countries' dependence on gas supplies, fostering commitment and potential concessions, even amid critical situations like the military invasion of Ukraine.<sup>17</sup> Being a major player in the EU gas market and carrying out the state's political intentions, Gazprom has been directly involved in preparing and setting up the first stages of the war with Ukraine in early 2022, which resulted in manipulation of prices and energy supplies in late 2021 and seriously raised questions about violation of security interests of the whole EU<sup>18</sup>. It also led to the absence of a clear position of energy-dependent Germany and Austria as for Russia's full-scale war and a verbal and monetary threat from the Russian Federation towards those countries that still supported Ukraine despite their need for Russian gas – for example, Poland and Bulgaria, along with other lobbyists for financial sanctions against Russia, have been personally blackmailed by president Putin<sup>19</sup>. Thus, Gazprom has indeed become one of the weapons of war in the hands of Russian politicians. For more than a decade, Gazprom has been trying to advance its influence softly too, spending tons of resources on the world's most popular sport which is football, of course. Here is a brief analysis of the activity of Gazprom, or rather the Russian political administration, in this sports area:

- since 2005 – owner and title partner of the Russian FC “Zenith” which regularly takes part in European competitions; Gazprom's marketing presence in the club in 2012 was estimated at \$20 million<sup>20</sup>;

- 2007-2022 – sponsor and main partner of the German FC “Schalke 04”; the prolonged agreement (2016-2022) foresaw a \$150 million investment from Gazprom<sup>21</sup>;

- since 2010 – the main partner of the Serbian FC “Red Star”; the Gazprom sponsorship provides the club with more than \$4 million a year<sup>22</sup>;

---

<sup>15</sup> Cull, N. (2009) Public diplomacy before Gullion: the evolution of a phrase. *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*, p. 19.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid.

<sup>17</sup> Riley, A. (2022) Gazprom set the Russian invasion of Ukraine in motion. Available from: <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/energysource/gazprom-set-the-russian-invasion-of-ukraine-in-motion/> [23 August, 2023].

<sup>18</sup> Cull, N. (2009) Op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>19</sup> Murphy, M. and Davies, A. (2022) Ukraine War: Russia gas supply cuts 'blackmail', says EU. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-61240499> [23 August, 2023].

<sup>20</sup> Long, M. (2012) Chelsea signed a global deal with Champions League sponsor. Available from: [https://www.sportspromedia.com/news/chelsea\\_sign\\_global\\_deal\\_with\\_newest\\_champions\\_league\\_sponsor/](https://www.sportspromedia.com/news/chelsea_sign_global_deal_with_newest_champions_league_sponsor/) [23 August, 2023].

<sup>21</sup> Uersfeld, St. (2016) Schalke extend Gazprom sponsorship agreement until 2022. Available from: <https://www.espn.com/soccer/schalke-04/story/2868174/schalke-extend-gazprom-sponsorship-deal-until-2022> [24 August, 2023].

- 2012-2015 – sponsor of London's FC “Chelsea” to which Gazprom provided electricity and gas services<sup>23</sup>;

- 2012-2022 – In partnership with UEFA, including support for the Champions League and Euro 2020, Gazprom provided European football with more than \$40 million in investment per season<sup>24</sup>.

Nevertheless, such football diplomacy which was aimed to construct a positive image of an energy company that does not even directly interact with the average user (a target audience is rather European leadership), collapsed just in one day – on February 24, 2022, when the owner of Gazprom, i.e. Russia, dared on a full-scale military invasion of Ukraine. Given that Gazprom's actions were part of the state's policy aimed at preparing for this invasion, it is impossible to continue to take this company only as a commercial actor in the energy market<sup>25</sup>. That is why sanctions against Gazprom in the football sphere were applied in February 2022 as one of the levers for restraining Russia's actions. FC “Zenit”, owned by Gazprom, along with other Russian sports teams and athletes were excluded from all international competitions, FC “Schalke 04” refused to wear the Gazprom logo on their kit, as all the partnerships with UEFA and FIFA were canceled by the world football stakeholders too.

2) mega-events – an economic miracle doesn't happen with the host countries of international sports championships, as noted by Simon Kuper, however, such mega-events serve well in strengthening the country's brand<sup>26</sup>. This is exactly what the Russian leadership looked forward to when it applied for the 2018 FIFA World Cup – a professor of economics at Temple University (Philadelphia, USA) argues that this cup played a role in Putin's project, who in this case gained a wide field for personal publicity, presenting himself to others as a strong world leader<sup>27</sup>. Interestingly, the FIFA opening ceremony 2018, where the Russian president gave a speech, was attended by a larger number of world politicians than any other FIFA World Cup by far, although most of them were not from the progressive Western countries, but from the developing ones in Central Asia. In addition, statistics from FIFA show that the 2018 Cup was also a record in terms of TV audience (210 countries) views as each match was watched by 190.5 million fans. At the same time, the number of foreigners who came to Russia for the FIFA World Cup was much lower than in previous tournaments hosted by other countries – only 2.9 million foreigners attended live matches compared to 6.5 million in Brazil, for example<sup>28</sup>. To continue to pretend that “everything is going as usual and as it should be”<sup>29</sup>, the Russian side spent about \$15 billion as the ideal picture was the most important result of hosting this international competition for Russia<sup>30</sup>. In other words, as it was happening in the course of the 2014 Olympics in Sochi, Russia was sending an ideological signal that the country was gaining its strength again and was able to hold such prestigious large-scale events as other world countries<sup>31</sup>. In 2014, Russia annexed parts of Ukraine, making the massive spending on its sports image, including events like the 2014 Olympics and the 2018 FIFA World Cup, briefly justified. Despite the annexation, effective boycotts or restrictions in the sports industry did not happen, allowing Russia to maintain its public image through international competitions.

---

<sup>22</sup> Gazprom saves Zvezda – New contract with Russian company brings EUR 4.5 million per year. Available from: <https://www.ekapija.com/en/news/1178885/gazprom-saves-zvezda-new-contract-with-russian-company-brings-eur-45-million> [28 August, 2023].

<sup>23</sup> Cull, N. (2009) Op. cit., p. 20.

<sup>24</sup> Pelit, A. (2022) UEFA, Drops \$45 Million Gazprom Sponsorship as Russia Sanctions Grow. Available from: <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/uefa-drops-45-million-gazprom-201830812.html> [25 August, 2023].

<sup>25</sup> Cull, N. (2009) Op. cit., p. 19-23.

<sup>26</sup> Macias, A. (2022) WNBA star Brittney Griner sentenced to nine years in prison by a Russian court. Available from: <https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/04/russian-court-finds-wnba-star-brittney-griner-guilty-on-drug-charges.html> [27 August, 2023].

<sup>27</sup> Жигалкин, Ю. Чемпионат во славу Путина. Футбол и имидж России в мире. Available from: <https://www.svoboda.org/a/usa-today-world-cup-putin/29292590.html> [20 August, 2023].

<sup>28</sup> Major, B. (2019) Increased Access Drives Brazil's Visitor Growth. Available from: <https://www.travelpulse.com/news/destinations/increased-access-drives-brazils-visitor-growth.html> [24 August, 2023].

<sup>29</sup> Ukrainian sports minister calls for political boycott of 2018 World Cup in Russia. Available from: <https://www.kyivpost.com/ukraine-politics/ukrainian-sports-minister-calls-for-political-boycott-of-2018-world-cup-in-russia.html> [24 August, 2023].

<sup>30</sup> Macias, A. (2022) Op. cit.

<sup>31</sup> Major, B. (2019) Op. cit.

3) status persons – the engagement of sports teams and athletes through non-sport entities, aligning with a desired purpose, serves as another avenue for international political influence. A football case, like Roman Abramovich's ownership of Chelsea FC, exemplifies how a sports unit's ownership can promote positive associations with a homeland's policies. Although direct ties between Abramovich and President Putin regarding Chelsea remain unproven, investigations suggest an indirect link, portraying Abramovich as a live tool for advancing Russia's influence. Over decades, he has cultivated a positive image, presenting himself as a legitimate businessman operating with “clean” Russian money, distancing from the Soviet past.<sup>32</sup>

4) consequently, more positive changes came with the purchase of the London football club – Chelsea managed to win important titles, fans sang songs of praise for the Russian, and charity foundations were launched under his sponsorship<sup>33</sup>. How exactly Abramovich was connected with the Russian political elite was not actively mentioned even in 2014, when some other oligarchs were sanctioned by the West as a result of the Russian invasion of eastern Ukraine and Ukrainian Crimea. However, as early as February 2022, former British Prime Minister Boris Johnson and Foreign Secretary Liz Trass officially announced Abramovich's ties to Putin and complicity in his military intentions<sup>34</sup>. The European Union also imposed several sanctions on Abramovich and thus included him in Putin's close circle<sup>35</sup>. No matter how hard Abramovich had been trying to sports-wash his own and the state's reputation, the consequences took place in the sports sphere as well – Chelsea was not only sold without Abramovich's ability to get his own money for it but was also deprived of the fans presence at their matches (ban on selling tickets), as well as the opportunity to sell their merchandise and even manage their hotel (ban on any income for Abramovich from the club).

#### ***How to sports-talk about a war***

The cases when sport serves as some kind of a curtain or tool for military-political tasks were analyzed above. Now the examples when the athletic ecosystem can help talk about the problem of war or even try to find ways to solve it will be given. “Football is a universal language that can open the hearts of young people and adults, as well as establish cross-cultural contacts and unite the population”, – said Michel Platini, sports administrator, and former UEFA chief<sup>36</sup>. Next is the following example – the role of football in the Russian-Ukrainian war and the actions of the Ukrainian side to sports-talk about it:

1) symbolic narrative – it is about the usage of visual and other symbolic instruments in sports to speak out or resolve conflict situations. For example, in the summer of 2020, Ukraine presented the new kit of its national football team, which it was going to play at Euro 2020, and on the collar of which the Ukrainian slogan “Glory to Ukraine – Glory to the Heroes!” was embroidered. There was also an image of the Ukrainian map on the front of the shirt that corresponds to the territory that was declared an independent state in 1991, i.e. with the Crimea and Donbas as parts of Ukraine. This new football kit was appreciated by some Western diplomats in Kyiv – embassies of Great Britain, the USA, Canada, and the Netherlands posted supportive photos on their social networks<sup>37</sup>. The protest was made by the Russian Federation, whose Ministry of Foreign Affairs not only equated the aforementioned Ukrainian slogan with a Nazi salute but also appealed to UEFA accusing Ukraine of political provocation by portraying the internationally recognized and sovereign territory of Ukraine<sup>38</sup>. In

---

<sup>32</sup> Seddon, M. and Massoudi, A. Hughes, L. and Cook, Ch. (2022) Poison, planes and Putin: Abramovich's race to save a fortune and stop the war. Available from: <https://www.ft.com/content/d80a42c1-bd1f-48e1-8dcf-f01ebdb304fb> [24 August, 2023].

<sup>33</sup> Macias, A. (2022) Op. cit.

<sup>34</sup> Murphy, M. and Davies, A. (2022) Op. cit.

<sup>35</sup> UK government approves sale of Chelsea by sanctioned Abramovich. Available from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/5/25/uk-government-approves-sale-of-chelsea-by-sanctioned-abramovich> [24 August, 2023].

<sup>36</sup> Football as a common language. Available from: <https://www.uefa.com/insideuefa/about-uefa/news/021c-0f8a791e7620-8bbe5ca21a76-1000--football-as-a-common-language/> [20 August, 2023].

<sup>37</sup> Західні посольства в Києві приєднуються до підтримки нової форми збірної України з футболу. Available from: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-zbirna-forma-posolstva-pidtrymka/31302965.html> [28 August, 2023].

<sup>38</sup> Ukraine's Euro 2020 football kit provokes outrage in Russia. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-57379875> [24 August, 2023].

the end, a compromise solution was found thanks to UEFA's intervention – the slogan on the collar was partly removed, but the map was left as it was.

Another example of a symbolic narrative about the active phase of the 2022 war also concerns the kit of the Ukrainian football team but with a different message. During the international charity tour in support of the Ukrainian war victims FC “Shakhtar” presented special T-shirts, that mentioned the cities of Ukraine that were severely affected by the Russian bombing instead of the players’ names on the back. Among them are Bucha, Irpin, Gostomel, Kharkiv, Mariupol, Chernihiv, Akhtyrka, Volnovakha, Kherson, and Mykolaiv. It should be mentioned here that such a connection between football and spatial objects is not new to sports in general. For example, geographer-researcher John Bale claims that sport is a spatial science<sup>39</sup>, which is expressed not only in the implementation of physical activity through space (stadium, pitch, racetrack, or water pools, etc.) but also in the mutual formation of location and sports actors. The latter means that the identification of space together with its population is complemented and supported by sporting achievements, teams, and stories, while the sport itself has the power to determine the urban space and the nature of its population. Interestingly, spatial discourse thus turns into the basis of group identity which must be protected in the face of external and internal threats<sup>40</sup>. That is why football actors use memorable places that either pay homage or record the facts of events, people's lives, or mark the processes in space – such places help to expand the collective, genealogical, and historical memory, which gives the individual a sense of how one’s personal history intersects with a global one<sup>41</sup>.

Individual athletes and teams possess informal influence to shape local and global agendas. While promoting changes in internal political and social issues is easier, sports diplomacy has been evident at the international level. Examining Ukrainian soft power post-war reveals a focus on war crimes and victims, gaining world attention. Symbolic condemnation of Russian armed aggression emerged in football and other sports events globally, allowing non-institutional actors to voice their opposition during games and competitions:

- February 2022 - the British clubs “Manchester City” and “Everton” dressed their players in Ukrainian colors before the match, and also placed banners at the Liverpool stadium in support of Ukraine<sup>42</sup>;
- March 2022 - Australian tennis player Daria Savil wore a uniform with the colors of the Ukrainian flag at a competition in California<sup>43</sup>;
- March 2022 - English golfer Tommy Fleetwood wore a yellow and blue ribbon at one of the competitions in Florida<sup>44</sup>;
- March 2022 – American race car driver Joey Logano placed the Ukrainian flag on the bumper of his car during the race in Las Vegas<sup>45</sup>;
- March 2022 - American basketball player Jeremy Zohan wore shoes in yellow and blue colors and with inscriptions calling for peace at a game in Missouri<sup>46</sup>;
- March 2022 - several NHL hockey teams from Canada and the USA began audio playing the Ukrainian national anthem before the start of their games<sup>47</sup>.

<sup>39</sup> Bale, J. (2003) *Sports Geography*. London: Routledge, p. 96.

<sup>40</sup> Оже, М. (2017) *Не-места. Введение в антропологию гипермодерна*. Москва: Новое литературное обозрение, с. 69.

<sup>41</sup> Ukraine's Euro 2020 football kit provokes outrage in Russia. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-57379875> [24 August, 2023].

<sup>42</sup> Hayes, J. (2022) How Athletes And The Sports World Has Shown Support For Ukraine. Available from: <https://www.buzzfeed.com/jeremyhayes/how-athletes-are-supporting-ukraine> [27 August, 2023].

<sup>43</sup> Mast, S. (2022) Athletes show their support for Ukraine. Available from: <https://share.america.gov/athletes-show-support-ukraine-photo-gallery/> [28 August, 2023].

<sup>44</sup> Football shows support for Ukraine. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/sport/football/60547642> [25 August, 2023].

<sup>45</sup> Hayes, J. (2022) Op. cit.

<sup>46</sup> Ibid.

<sup>47</sup> Ottawa Senators to play Ukrainian national anthem before home games. Available from: <https://www.thedailygoalhorn.com/ottawa-senators-to-play-ukrainian-national-anthem/> [23 August, 2022]; Sports world stands with Ukraine. Available from: <https://www.usatoday.com/picture-gallery/sports/2022/03/07/ukraine-russia-news-sports-world-photos/9410902002/> [22 August, 2022]; Stunson, M. (2022) Watch stirring

Ukraine's soft power expanded, utilizing not only its own actors but also gaining influence through various channels. Symbolic support and condemnation by sports representatives contribute to the continuous renewal of intense social and political discourse, elevating it to a critical level through media coverage and the visibility of sports actors and events.

2) social initiatives – it is possible to at least draw attention through charity games or other activities involving teams or athletes to the messages they carry or to raise the necessary funds and other assistance in the context of socio-political issues. It was exactly such a tool used by the Ukrainian side in the spring of 2022 to conduct sports diplomacy in military conditions. Leaders of the Ukrainian Premier League and clubs that regularly play at the European level, FC “Shakhtar” and FC “Dynamo (Kyiv)”, as well as ministries of Ukraine organized a European tour to raise funds to help victims of the Russian invasion and focus public attention: “We want to talk about peace and war through these matches”<sup>48</sup>. Ten games, that took place in Turkey, Poland, Greece, Croatia, Italy, etc., managed to gather a stadium audience of almost 136,000 spectators as well as more than 1 million euros in aid; these matches were broadcast on both the national channels of the participating countries and Ukrainian television<sup>49</sup>.

### **How to sports-manage a war**

First of all, here is something about the trend that strengthens the sports ecosystem and means the weakening of the state institution at the same time – such a new “liquid” modernity is described, for example, by the Polish-British philosopher Zygmunt Bauman: “An open and increasingly defenseless nation-state is constantly losing its power, evaporating into the global space while redirecting and subsidizing its political skills to [others]”<sup>50</sup>. So here is the analysis of the features of this type of replacement or partial substitution of state functions by sports in more detail. In the modern context, the main political movements are no longer the prerogative of a state only, which is losing its significance, but of other non-state channels of global interaction<sup>51</sup>. There are sports organizations of various levels and scales that can perform diplomatic functions and overtake the role of those who either complement the international political agenda or even independently form it on a par with other governments.

Sports organizations exhibit an expanded role in influencing real wars. Notable examples include charity initiatives supporting young athletes and families affected by armed conflicts, providing humanitarian aid to war victims, and contributing to the restoration of damaged sports ecosystems. However, let's consider more unique examples of how UEFA has been trying to alleviate the effects of the Russian-Ukrainian war. Here it is important to emphasize that this football stakeholder of Europe did not have an unequivocal position until February 2022 – there was no official condemnation or any restrictions on clubs or the Russian national team in response to the occupation of Donbas and annexation of Crimea. On the contrary, some matches of Euro 2020 took place in Russia, Russia's pro-government sponsors continued to hold title positions in the institution while the organization's leaders themselves did not comment on hosting the World Cup in Russia in 2018. UEFA's clearer position crystallized in the last days of February 2022, becoming one of the fastest international reactions to the fact of a full-fledged war against Ukraine. At the exact time, on February 25, 2022, the IOC announced its reaction as well as measures applied to the Russian Federation and Belarus as a result of their aggressive military actions against Ukraine, based on the UN resolution of December 2021, as of February 25, 2022, the IOC posted on their official website. It is about one of the sacred principles of the Olympic movement, which even such an organization as the United Nations decided to transfer to a large-scale level – the phenomenon of the Olympic truce, which dates back to ancient Greece and is meant to ensure a peaceful atmosphere in the world, so that athletes and teams from countries-participants could freely and effectively participate in the Games, as the current Olympic Charter notes. And because the Olympic truce should last seven days before the start and seven days after the end of the competition, the IOC accused the Russian Federation and Belarus of armed aggression not

---

performance of Ukrainian national anthem at NHL game. Available from: <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/national/article259002313.html> [28 August, 2023].

<sup>48</sup> Shakhtar Global Tour: charity match schedule. Available from: [https://shakhtar.com/en/news/2022/april/8\\_news/8\\_shakhtar-global-tour/](https://shakhtar.com/en/news/2022/april/8_news/8_shakhtar-global-tour/) [27 August, 2023].

<sup>49</sup> 13 European clubs provided aid to Ukraine. Available from: [https://shakhtar.com/en/news/2022/april/28\\_news/28\\_fc-shakhtar\\_efdn\\_legia-warszawa/](https://shakhtar.com/en/news/2022/april/28_news/28_fc-shakhtar_efdn_legia-warszawa/) [27 August, 2023].

<sup>50</sup> Бауман, З. (2013) *Плинні часи: життя в добу непевності*. Київ: Критика, с. 174.

<sup>51</sup> Gebhard, C. (2017) One world, many actors, *E-International Relations*, p. 32.



only on a moral and ethical level but also on a legal one thanks to the recognition of sports values by other international stakeholders, such as the UN, as of February 25, 2022, the IOC posted on their official website. Because the Russian Federation launched a full-scale war against Ukraine even before the end of one of the stages of the Olympics (the Winter Paralympics in Beijing lasted until March 13, 2022, and the attack took place on February 24, 2022), the IOC called on the world community to complement such a reaction with these sanctions towards the Russian Federation and Belarus: to move or cancel all sports events planned on the territory of the Russian Federation and Belarus as well as not to display the Russian and Belarusian flag and anthem at international competitions, as of February 25, 2022, the IOC posted on their official website. Based on such actions of the IOC and UEFA I will list more universal methods of sports diplomacy, which is part of the public diplomacy, that other non-governmental sports actors can carry out:

1) sports isolation of the aggressor – in case of violation of basic norms of international law, a sports organization can use the isolation of the country, so to break its sports ecosystem and, thus, force it to restrain policies that have led to serious offenses. This is rooted in the basic principles of the Olympic movement, which defines the vision of the world of sport – mutual respect, ethical values, and the promotion of peace in communities, as the current Olympic Charter notes. UEFA tried a similar mechanism in February 2022 towards Russian football. The first reaction was the withdrawal of the right to host the final of the Champions League in St. Petersburg in May 2022<sup>52</sup>. As Russia's aggression did not subside, UEFA gradually took more radical steps in a few days – excluding all Russian clubs and the national football team from all the international competitions for the 2022-2023 season as well as canceling the partnership with pro-government Russian sponsor Gazprom, as of February 28, 2022, the FIFA posted on their official website. Such isolation is a necessary tool to put pressure on the aggressor country to 1) make the leadership feel that its actions are not tolerated and negatively affect all the spheres of state and people's activities, 2) create additional pressure on the leadership from the side of dissatisfied athletes deprived of the right to develop their professional careers, 3) deprive the aggressor of status and equality with other countries that have the right to participate in or host prestigious international competitions, 4) reduce the risk of potential public political statements on a base of grand sports pitches, 5) complicate access to sports financial flows due to the violation of the broken ecosystem.

2) symbolic narrative – it is important to be able to use the right symbolic narratives as they can attract attention and remind people about the socio-political problem. Yellow and blue armbands on top European footballers, posters in the stands against the war and in support of Ukraine as well as A-listers anti-war photos before matches – all this also applies to sports diplomacy and aims to support discourse and public image. That is why for the final of the Champions League 2022 UEFA has introduced a special game ball, which focuses on two words “PEACE” or «МИР», as of May 28, 2022, the UEFA posted on their official website. Ironically, this is exactly the game that was supposed to take place in St. Petersburg, not Paris as it happened. It is also important that, on average, an event such as the Champions League final attracts about 400 million TV spectators<sup>53</sup> – the audience to which the mentioned message on the ball as well as on the screens and banners of the stadium was addressed.

**Conclusion.** Sport transcends physical activity, embodying a military spirit, near-cult experience, and spatial features that reflect social and political preferences. Professional athletics, often representing a state and its traditions, is seldom neutral. In this context, sport becomes a versatile instrument for both war and peace. The initiative to use sports for international interactions can originate from government officials, public organizations, local communities, or influential athletes like Cristiano Ronaldo and Lionel Messi, who, with a combined audience exceeding 700 million subscribers, stand among the world's most influential public figures.<sup>54</sup> Sport's influence on millions makes it a powerful tool for various actors. In the context of the Russian-Ukrainian conflict, sports-washing emerges, using star athletes, hosting international events, and investing in facilities to shape a positive state image.

<sup>52</sup> Ukraine crisis: Uefa to move Champions League final after Russian invasion. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/sport/football/60504979> [23 August, 2023].

<sup>53</sup> Burton, N. (2022) Super Bowl vs World Cup & Champions League: How do viewing figures for soccer & NFL showpieces compare? Available from: <https://www.goal.com/en-us/news/super-bowl-vs-world-cup-champions-league-viewing-figures/blte47db8809dbd0a6d> [20 August 2023].

<sup>54</sup> List of most-followed Instagram accounts. Available from: <https://www.socialtracker.io/toplists/top-50-instagram-users-by-followers/> [28 August, 2023].

Achieving these goals may involve non-sports methods, especially in totalitarian regimes blending hard and soft power. Ukraine's response to Russia's war showcases using sports to communicate about the conflict. Sports diplomacy has diverse forms, including political negotiations in tournaments, boycotts, sports alliances, sports ambassadors, and international exchanges. Despite sport's potential for peace, stability remains elusive. Historical examples illustrate sport's role in normalizing relations between nations, emphasizing the need for global alliances, clear demands, support, and a combination of government backing with grassroots pressure for real impact<sup>55</sup>.

#### Список джерел

1. Бауман, З. (2013) *Плинні часи: життя в добу непевності*. Київ: Критика.
2. Жигалкин, Ю. (2018) Чемпионат во славу Путина. Футбол и имидж России в мире. Available from: <https://www.svoboda.org/a/usa-today-world-cup-putin/29292590.html> [20 August, 2023].
3. Західні посольства в Києві приєднуються до підтримки нової форми збірної України з футболу. Available from: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-zbirna-forma-posolstva-pidtrymka/31302965.html> [28 August, 2023].
4. Оже, М. (2017) *Не-места. Введение в антропологию гипермодерна*. Москва: Новое литературное обозрение.
5. Стратегія публічної дипломатії Міністерства закордонних справ України (2021).
6. Armstrong, G. (2003) *Football hooligans: knowing the score*. Oxford: Berg Publishers.
7. Baker, W. (1988) *Sports in the Western world*. University of Illinois Press.
8. Bale, J. (2003) *Sports Geography*. London: Routledge.
9. Borge, S. (2019) *The philosophy of football*. London: Routledge.
10. Bromberger, C. (1995) Football as a worldview and as a ritual. *French Cultural Studies*.
11. Burton, N. (2022) Super Bowl vs World Cup & Champions League: How do viewing figures for soccer & NFL showpieces compare? Available from: <https://www.goal.com/en-us/news/super-bowl-vs-world-cup-champions-league-viewing-figures/blte47db8809dbd0a6d> [20 August 2023].
12. Cull, N. (2009) Public diplomacy before Gullion: the evolution of a phrase. *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*.
13. Dunning, E. (1999) *Sport matters*. London: Routledge.
14. Football as a common language. Available from: <https://www.uefa.com/insideuefa/about-uefa/news/021c-0f8a791e7620-8bbe5ca21a76-1000--football-as-a-common-language/> [20 August, 2023].
15. Football shows support for Ukraine. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/sport/football/60547642> [25 August, 2023].
16. Gazprom saves Zvezda – New contract with Russian company brings EUR 4.5 million per year. Available from: <https://www.ekapija.com/en/news/1178885/gazprom-saves-zvezda-new-contract-with-russian-company-brings-eur-45-million> [28 August, 2023].
17. Gebhard, C. (2017) One world, many actors, *E-International Relations*, 32-46.
18. Goldblatt, D. (2014) *The game of our lives, the English Premier League and the making of modern Britain*. New York: Bold Type Books.
19. Guttman, A. (2004) *From ritual to record. The Nature of Modern Sports*. NY: Columbia University Press.
20. Hayes, J. (2022) How Athletes And The Sports World Has Shown Support For Ukraine. Available from: <https://www.buzzfeed.com/jeremyhayes/how-athletes-are-supporting-ukraine> [27 August, 2023].
21. Kuper, S. (1996) *Football against the enemy*. London: Orion.
22. Leibs, A. (2004) *Sports and games of the Renaissance*. Westport: Greenwood, p. 56.
23. List of most-followed Instagram accounts. Available from: <https://www.socialtracker.io/toplists/top-50-instagram-users-by-followers/> [28 August, 2023].
24. Long, M. (2012) Chelsea signed a global deal with Champions League sponsor. Available from: [https://www.sportspromedia.com/news/chelsea\\_sign\\_global\\_deal\\_with\\_newest\\_champions\\_league\\_sponsor/](https://www.sportspromedia.com/news/chelsea_sign_global_deal_with_newest_champions_league_sponsor/) [23 August, 2023].

---

<sup>55</sup> Goldblatt, D. (2014) *The game of our lives, the English Premier League and the making of modern Britain*. New York: Bold Type Books, p. 201.

25. Loy, J. and Hesketh, G. (1984) The Agon Motif: A Prolegomenon for the Study of Agonetic Behavior, *Contribution of Sociology to the Study of Sport*, p. 29–50.
26. Macias, A. (2022) WNBA star Brittney Griner sentenced to nine years in prison by a Russian court. Available from: <https://www.cnn.com/2022/08/04/russian-court-finds-wnba-star-brittney-griner-guilty-on-drug-charges.html> [27 August, 2023].
27. Maffesoli, M. (1995) *The time of tribes*. London: SAGE Publications.
28. Major, B. (2019) Increased Access Drives Brazil's Visitor Growth. Available from: <https://www.travelpulse.com/news/destinations/increased-access-drives-brazils-visitor-growth.html> [24 August, 2023].
29. Mast, S. (2022) Athletes show their support for Ukraine. Available from: <https://share.america.gov/athletes-show-support-ukraine-photo-gallery/> [28 August, 2023].
30. Murphy, M. and Davies, A. (2022) Ukraine War: Russia gas supply cuts 'blackmail', says EU. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-61240499> [23 August, 2023].
31. Ottawa Senators to play Ukrainian national anthem before home games Available from: <https://www.thedailygoalhorn.com/ottawa-senators-to-play-ukrainian-national-anthem/> [23 August, 2023].
32. Parry, J. (2007) *Sport and spirituality*. Oxon: Routledge.
33. Pelit, A. (2022) UEFA, Drops \$45 Million Gazprom Sponsorship as Russia Sanctions Grow. Available from: <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/uefa-drops-45-million-gazprom-201830812.html> [25 August, 2023].
34. Riley, A. (2022) Gazprom set the Russian invasion of Ukraine in motion. Available from: <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/energysource/gazprom-set-the-russian-invasion-of-ukraine-in-motion/> [23 August, 2023].
35. Russia tycoon sues publisher and Reuters reporter over Putin book. Available from: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-chelsea-abramovich-book/russia-tycoon-sues-publisher-and-reuters-reporter-over-putin-book-idUSKBN2BF1XV> [25 August, 2023].
36. Seddon, M. and Massoudi, A. Hughes, L. and Cook, Ch. (2022) Poison, planes and Putin: Abramovich's race to save a fortune and stop the war. Available from: <https://www.ft.com/content/d80a42c1-bd1f-48e1-8dcf-f01ebdb304fb> [24 August, 2023].
37. Shakhtar Global Tour: charity match schedule. Available from: [https://shakhtar.com/en/news/2022/april/8\\_news/8\\_shakhtar-global-tour/](https://shakhtar.com/en/news/2022/april/8_news/8_shakhtar-global-tour/) [27 August, 2023].
38. Sports world stands with Ukraine. Available from: <https://www.usatoday.com/picture-gallery/sports/2022/03/07/ukraine-russia-news-sports-world-photos/9410902002/> [22 August, 2023].
39. Stunson, M. (2022) Watch stirring performance of Ukrainian national anthem at NHL game. Available from: <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/national/article259002313.html> [28 August, 2023].
40. Uersfeld, St. (2016) Schalke extend Gazprom sponsorship agreement until 2022. Available from: <https://www.espn.com/soccer/schalke-04/story/2868174/schalke-extend-gazprom-sponsorship-deal-until-2022> [24 August, 2023].
41. UK government approves sale of Chelsea by sanctioned Abramovich. Available from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/5/25/uk-government-approves-sale-of-chelsea-by-sanctioned-abramovich> [24 August, 2023].
42. Ukraine crisis: Uefa to move Champions League final after Russian invasion. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/sport/football/60504979> [23 August, 2023].
43. Ukraine's Euro 2020 football kit provokes outrage in Russia. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-57379875> [24 August, 2023].
44. Ukrainian sports minister calls for political boycott of 2018 World Cup in Russia. Available from: <https://www.kyivpost.com/ukraine-politics/ukrainian-sports-minister-calls-for-political-boycott-of-2018-world-cup-in-russia.html> [24 August, 2023].
45. Zidan, K. (2021) How boxer-turned-politician Vitali Klitschko began preparing for war with Russia. Available from: <https://www.bloodyelbow.com/2022/1/13/22880241/vitali-klitschko-champion-boxing-politican-mayor-kyiv-putin-war-russia-ukraine> [28 August, 2023].
46. 13 European clubs provided aid to Ukraine. Available from: [https://shakhtar.com/en/news/2022/april/28\\_news/28\\_fc-shakhtar\\_efdn\\_legia-warszawa/](https://shakhtar.com/en/news/2022/april/28_news/28_fc-shakhtar_efdn_legia-warszawa/) [27 August, 2023].

## References

1. Bauman, Z. (2013) *Liquid times: Living in an Age of Uncertainty*. Kyiv: Krytyka.
2. Zhygalkin, Y. (2018) Chempionat vo slavy Putina. Futbol i imidg Rossii v mire. Available from: <https://www.svoboda.org/a/usa-today-world-cup-putin/29292590.html> [20 August, 2023].
3. Zahidni posolstva v Kyievi pryiednyiytsa do pidtrymky novoyi formy zbirnoyi Ukrainy z futbolu. Available from: <https://www.radiosvoboda.org/a/news-zbirna-forma-posolstva-pidtrymka/31302965.html> [28 August, 2023].
4. Augé, M. (2017) *Non-Places: Introduction to an Anthropology of Supermodernity*. Moscow: Novoe literaturnoe obozrenie.
5. Stratehiiia publichnoi diplomatii Ministerstva zakordonnykh sprav Ukrainy (2021).
6. Armstrong, G. (2003) *Football hooligans: knowing the score*. Oxford: Berg Publishers.
7. Baker, W. (1988) *Sports in the Western world*. University of Illinois Press.
8. Bale, J. (2003) *Sports Geography*. London: Routledge.
9. Borge, S. (2019) *The philosophy of football*. London: Routledge.
10. Bromberger, C. (1995) Football as a worldview and as a ritual. *French Cultural Studies*.
11. Burton, N. (2022) Super Bowl vs World Cup & Champions League: How do viewing figures for soccer & NFL showpieces compare? Available from: <https://www.goal.com/en-us/news/super-bowl-vs-world-cup-champions-league-viewing-figures/blte47db8809dbd0a6d> [20 August 2023].
12. Cull, N. (2009) Public diplomacy before Gullion: the evolution of a phrase. *Routledge Handbook of Public Diplomacy*.
13. Dunning, E. (1999) *Sport matters*. London: Routledge.
14. Football as a common language. Available from: <https://www.uefa.com/insideuefa/about-uefa/news/021c-0f8a791e7620-8bbe5ca21a76-1000--football-as-a-common-language/> [20 August, 2023].
15. Football shows support for Ukraine. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/sport/football/60547642> [25 August, 2023].
16. Gazprom saves Zvezda – New contract with Russian company brings EUR 4.5 million per year. Available from: <https://www.ekapija.com/en/news/1178885/gazprom-saves-zvezda-new-contract-with-russian-company-brings-eur-45-million> [28 August, 2023].
17. Gebhard, C. (2017) One world, many actors, *E-International Relations*, p. 32-46.
18. Goldblatt, D. (2014) *The game of our lives, the English Premier League and the making of modern Britain*. New York: Bold Type Books.
19. Guttmann, A. (2004) *From ritual to record. The Nature of Modern Sports*. NY: Columbia University Press.
20. Hayes, J. (2022) How Athletes And The Sports World Has Shown Support For Ukraine. Available from: <https://www.buzzfeed.com/jeremyhayes/how-athletes-are-supporting-ukraine> [27 August, 2023].
21. Kuper, S. (1996) *Football against the enemy*. London: Orion.
22. Leibs, A. (2004) *Sports and games of the Renaissance*. Westport: Greenwood.
23. List of most-followed Instagram accounts. Available from: <https://www.socialtracker.io/toplists/top-50-instagram-users-by-followers/> [28 August, 2023].
24. Long, M. (2012) Chelsea signed a global deal with Champions League sponsor. Available from: [https://www.sportspromedia.com/news/chelsea\\_sign\\_global\\_deal\\_with\\_newest\\_champions\\_league\\_sponsor/](https://www.sportspromedia.com/news/chelsea_sign_global_deal_with_newest_champions_league_sponsor/) [23 August, 2023].
25. Loy, J. and Hesketh, G. (1984) The Agon Motif: A Prolegomenon for the Study of Agonetic Behavior, *Contribution of Sociology to the Study of Sport*, p. 29–50.
26. Macias, A. (2022) WNBA star Brittney Griner sentenced to nine years in prison by a Russian court. Available from: <https://www.cnbc.com/2022/08/04/russian-court-finds-wnba-star-brittney-griner-guilty-on-drug-charges.html> [27 August, 2023].
27. Maffesoli, M. (1995) *The time of tribes*. London: SAGE Publications.
28. Major, B. (2019) Increased Access Drives Brazil's Visitor Growth. Available from: <https://www.travelpulse.com/news/destinations/increased-access-drives-brazils-visitor-growth.html> [24 August, 2023].
29. Mast, S. (2022) Athletes show their support for Ukraine. Available from: <https://share.america.gov/athletes-show-support-ukraine-photo-gallery/> [28 August, 2023].

30. Murphy, M. and Davies, A. (2022) Ukraine War: Russia gas supply cuts 'blackmail', says EU. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-61240499> [23 August, 2023].
31. Ottawa Senators to play Ukrainian national anthem before home games. Available from: <https://www.thedailygoalhorn.com/ottawa-senators-to-play-ukrainian-national-anthem/> [23 August, 2023].
32. Parry, J. (2007) *Sport and spirituality*. Oxon: Routledge.
33. Pelit, A. (2022) UEFA, Drops \$45 Million Gazprom Sponsorship as Russia Sanctions Grow. Available from: <https://finance.yahoo.com/news/uefa-drops-45-million-gazprom-201830812.html> [25 August, 2023].
34. Riley, A. (2022) Gazprom set the Russian invasion of Ukraine in motion. Available from: <https://www.atlanticcouncil.org/blogs/energysource/gazprom-set-the-russian-invasion-of-ukraine-in-motion/> [23 August, 2023].
35. Russia tycoon sues publisher and Reuters reporter over Putin book. Available from: <https://www.reuters.com/article/us-chelsea-abramovich-book/russia-tycoon-sues-publisher-and-reuters-reporter-over-putin-book-idUSKBN2BF1XV> [25 August, 2023].
36. Seddon, M. and Massoudi, A. Hughes, L. and Cook, Ch. (2022) Poison, planes and Putin: Abramovich's race to save a fortune and stop the war. Available from: <https://www.ft.com/content/d80a42c1-bd1f-48e1-8dcf-f01ebdb304fb> [24 August, 2023].
37. Shakhtar Global Tour: charity match schedule. Available from: [https://shakhtar.com/en/news/2022/april/8\\_news/8\\_shakhtar-global-tour/](https://shakhtar.com/en/news/2022/april/8_news/8_shakhtar-global-tour/) [27 August, 2023].
38. Sports world stands with Ukraine. Available from: <https://www.usatoday.com/picture-gallery/sports/2022/03/07/ukraine-russia-news-sports-world-photos/9410902002/> [22 August, 2023].
39. Stunson, M. (2022) Watch stirring performance of Ukrainian national anthem at NHL game. Available from: <https://www.miamiherald.com/news/nation-world/national/article259002313.html> [28 August, 2023].
40. Uersfeld, St. (2016) <https://www.espn.com/soccer/schalke-04/story/2868174/schalke-extend-gazprom-sponsorship-deal-until-2022> [24 August, 2023].
41. UK government approves sale of Chelsea by sanctioned Abramovich. Available from: <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2022/5/25/uk-government-approves-sale-of-chelsea-by-sanctioned-abramovich> [24 August, 2023].
42. Ukraine crisis: Uefa to move Champions League final after Russian invasion. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/sport/football/60504979> [23 August, 2023].
43. Ukraine's Euro 2020 football kit provokes outrage in Russia. Available from: <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-europe-57379875> [24 August, 2023].
44. Ukrainian sports minister calls for political boycott of 2018 World Cup in Russia. Available from: <https://www.kyivpost.com/ukraine-politics/ukrainian-sports-minister-calls-for-political-boycott-of-2018-world-cup-in-russia.html> [24 August, 2023].
45. Zidan, K. (2021) How boxer-turned-politician Vitali Klitschko began preparing for war with Russia. Available from: <https://www.bloodyelbow.com/2022/1/13/22880241/vitali-klitschko-champion-boxing-politican-mayor-kyiv-putin-war-russia-ukraine> [28 August, 2023].
46. 13 European clubs provided aid to Ukraine. Available from: [https://shakhtar.com/en/news/2022/april/28\\_news/28\\_fc-shakhtar\\_efdn\\_legia-warszawa/](https://shakhtar.com/en/news/2022/april/28_news/28_fc-shakhtar_efdn_legia-warszawa/) [27 August, 2023].